A WORD OR TWO *IN VINDICATION* OF THE UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD AND OF MAGDALEN COLLEGE *IN PARTICULAR* FROM THE *POSTHUMOUS ASPERSIONS* OF MR. GIBBON.

by W. Hawkins.

Nulla mihi, inquam, Religio est.
At mî; sum paulò infirmior; unus Multorum; ignoscès— Hor.

A

WORD OR TWO

IN VINDICATION

OF

THE UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD

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IN PARTICULAR

OF

POSTSCRIPTS & APPENDIXES

TO

Mrs. GIBBON.

I was matriculated, says the Historian, *as a Gentleman-commoner of Magdalen College, before I had accomplished the fifteenth year of my age*†. He frankly confesses it was *a singular and a desperate measure*. Matriculations and admissions not less early have happened within the recollection of the Author of this Vindication. Nothing however can excuse the imprudence of sending boys so hastily into the society of men, but unusual sobriety and discernment on their part, united to a more than common proportion of attainments, and a well-settled habit of application. Without these requisites there is as little hope of a youth being steady in his conduct, as there is of the mariner being

† p. 29.

able

able to croſs the Atlantic in his bark, who puts to sea without ballast or lading, and without knowledge of the art of navigation. If before he was poſſeſſed of any of these qualifications, Mr. Gibbon was launched into the world, every consequent imprudence ought to be imputed to his friends and to himself, and not to the waves which overwhelmed and wrecked him. Poſſeſſed, as he was, at best of a slight knowledge of a few odes of Horace and episodes of Virgil, a stranger to the *beauties* of the Latin, and ignorant even of the *rudiments* of the Greek tongue, a reader merely of *Pope's Homer* and *Dryden's Virgil*, of the *concise*, *terse*, and *sententious* Phædrus, or of the *copious brevity* of Cornelius Nepos— what could his ill-judging parent expect from committing so shallow a novice to the boisterous element of a public University? To plunge a child so miserably deficient into a vast academy where (to say the worst of academical merit) there could not be even a Choirister of

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his own years so destitute of knowledge as himself, was to expose him without chance of preservation to the seduction of the idle and profligate, and to the contempt of the better informed. The Father who is weak enough to send his child at so unseasonable a period to a public seminary of young men of riper years, ought to ensure his good conduct, by the appointment of a private Tutor or Superintendant, who should regulate his expences and his studies. Mr. Gibbon was manifestly, from his own account, incapable of self-management when sent to the University, and if no male instructor could have been found, he ought at least to have been followed by his *dear and excellent Aunt*. Could it be expected that one who was, speaking most strictly, *an infant* at fourteen, should conduct himself with even tolerable propriety, where so many dangers surrounded him? To place such a boy suddenly in the society of men, to give him the management of his purse and pursuits, to grant him an allowance

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which was larger than neceſsary, and to trust him at the same time with the power of commanding an *indefinite latitude of credit*, were dangerous experiments, the mischievous result of which might have been easily calculated. In fourteen months his academical career is finished, and furnishes us with a narrative, such as we might have expected, truly vexatious to his friends and inglorious to himself. Instead of employing the *key* delivered to him when admitted into Magdalen College, by which he might have enjoyed the use of *a numerous and learned Library*, he scorns the occupation of a *plebeian* student, evades his Tutor's lectures under frivolous pretences which he denominates *apologies*, and elopes frequently from college— clandestinely perhaps, and without leave. If from the *fourteen* months of his academical existence, we deduct about *five* months of vacation which must neceſsarily have happened in that period, we discover that in *nine* months this gay libertine made no leſs than *six* excursions, one

to Bath, one into Bucks, and four to London. That each of these philosophical perambulations was of considerable duration, is manifest when he adds, *I eloped from Oxford, I returned to college, in a few days I eloped again, as if I had been an independent stranger in a hired lodging*†. Being thus constantly absent upon some idle pretence or other which cannot now be recollected, or perhaps without even the formality of a pretence, and certainly without the formality of permiſsion, how was it poſsible that he should *once hear the voice of admonition*, or *once feel the hand of controul**. In a large college the *absence* of an individual, especially of Mr. Gibbon's dimensions, might not have been *visible*, as he incorrectly aſserts it must have been‖. The Fellows of Magdalen college are unacquainted with any miracle of philosophy, by which non-entity and vacuum can be made diſcernible. That his irregular behaviour, however, was *observed*, is manifest, and that it was *resented* is as plain, when he informs us

† p. 42 * p. 43 ‖ p. 42

us, that the College very readily embraced, at the fourteen months' end, an opportunity of for ever shutting their gates against his return†. Whatever he may aſsert of the inattention of his superiors, he has clearly proved by recording this fact, that there was not that absolute want of restraint and discipline of which he has so loudly complained.

The whole of Mr. Gibbon's residence in the University was composed of those few intervening days which fell between his different elopements. If we suppose he had *philosophy* enough to endure *the irksomeneſs of a cloistered life* for a *week* at least in each of these intervals of repose (and he allows himself that they were composed only of *a few days* each) we shall perceive that the whole of his actual residence in Oxford might have been *six weeks* in nine months. But not to confine him too strictly to his own words, let us grant that he resided *six months*. In *six months* time then was this juvenile and incompetent idler able to take a complete

† P. 47.

complete survey of the discipline of a great University which consists of *five and twenty* several societies. In *six months* was he able to decide upon the merits and demerits of all its members, Tutors and Profeſſors, at a time when his own knowledge did not extend farther than the Greek Alphabet, Phædrus' Fables, Cornelius Nepos, a few odes in Horace, and a few Episodes in Virgil. It will be needleſs to spend time in arguing that a youth so ignorant was not capable of forming a just estimate of the proficiency of his own companions, nor even of the Chorister who waited at his table; much leſs could he measure by his childish standard the abilities of Tutors and Profeſsors. It is wonderful that in penning his opinions of our English University the Historian should not have recollected that they were the opinions of a boy, who by his own confeſsion was not sufficiently improved to be able to judge of matters so important. Though he might at his matriculation have *puzzled* even *a Doctor* with that heterogeneous mixture

ture of scraps from the alms-basket of learning, which he had accidentally picked up, and which he fondly stiles *erudition*, has he not himself informed us that with respect to the knowledge infused at the public school and the University, he was in a state of *ignorance of which a school-boy would have been ashamed*†? At a more advanced period of life, and of literary improvement, when introduced to some young men of Christ Church, he formed a more favourable opinion, of the discipline of that society, of the utility of its exercises, and of the ability of its officers. Being then better able to wield matters of such important magnitude, and to poise them in the ponderous balance of justice, immoveable to the sinews of a child, he declared them *not wanting*. Had he extended his investigations still farther before he wrote his Memoirs, had he sought for the whole truth and not sacrificed the small part of it thus acquired to the angry conclusions of *fifteen*, he would in the end without doubt have pronounced an eulogium, a reluctant

† p. 31.

luctant one perhaps, even on his own College. How much soever he may have laboured to injure that society in the eyes of his countrymen, it ought always to be remembered, that the discipline of that house, feeble as he represents it, was the immediate cause of his preservation. His *expulsion* from the gates of Magdalen College, was the occasion of his being placed in a situation better suited to correct his extravagances and follies. It was Magdalen College which returned him into the hands of his friends, as fitter for the society of the School than that of the College. It was Magdalen College which placed him under a vigilant preceptor, abridged him of the dangerous powers which had been committed to him, and gave the management of his pursuits and his expences to a wiser head. It was Magdalen College which compelled him to exchange *elegant apartments* for a *small chamber ill-contrived and ill-furnished*, banished him for a time from his country and his friends, and made him fly from

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the ſtately edifices of Oxford to an *old inconvenient tenement* in Lauſanne, in *a narrow gloomy ſtreet the moſt unfrequented of an unhandſome town.* Whatever application, ſobriety, and literary deſert were conſequent, muſt be referred to this ſalutary though ſevere proof of diſcipline ſtill alive and ſtill endued with energy in Magdalen College. Had the Hiſtorian been ingenuous and *Chriſtian*, had he poſſeſſed even the humanity of the *Philoſopher*, he would have ſuffered thoſe vindictive heartburnings, which this ſpirited meaſure excited in his infant boſom, to have been ſoftened down by the recollection of the benefits which it ultimately produced. He would at a more informed period have felt even gratitude to a ſociety, which intercepted him in his precipitate career at ſo momentous a criſis, and compelled his friends to adopt meaſures better calculated to correct his miſchievous propenſities, and leſs likely to terminate in his ruin. Carefully to treaſure up in his mind for more than forty

years

years this imaginary inſult, to uſe the ſtrength of manhood to revenge the correction of infancy, and to aſſault the mother who diſgraced him for the beſt proof ſhe could give him of her regard, a timely and determined uſe of ſeverity, betrays a heart, however philoſophical, at leaſt unfilial and unmanly. To extend hatred to all eccleſiaſtics, becauſe a clerical ſociety had thus corrected him, to revile indiſcriminately both Univerſities, to contemn a whole Church foreign as well as national, to war with religion itſelf, and ſpeak with averſion of its miniſters wherever ſituated and however amiable (if ſuch acts were the conſequences of his expulſion from Oxford) will add no dignity to his preſent or future character. They will only ſerve to convince the more liberal part of mankind, that there are opaque spots, and spots of no common magnitude, even within the luminous diſc of Gibbon.

Had the military Hiſtorian, when he reſolved to open his batteries upon Mag-

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dalen College, contented himſelf with fairly thundering out the *truth*, his attack would have been feeble however laboured, and however ardent with the blaze of metaphorical phoſphorus. The majeſtic foppery of the well-turned period could not alone have injured the reputation of his college, nor have excited indignation in the breaſt of any one who belongs to it. But ſo little was the attention which the Author paid, during the ſhort intervals of his reſidence, to collegial concerns, that he repreſents the diſcipline of his houſe to have been ſuch as it *never* was, and very much unlike what it now is. A boy of fourteen hurrying from Bath to Oxford, from Oxford to London, from London into Bucks, with little or no reſpite or ceſſation, may know ſomething of Poſt-chaiſes, Stage-Coaches, whips and horſes, oſtlers and poſtilions, but will not upon any public road hear much of College exercites. It is not wonderful that to a youth ſo engaged, the Latin declamation in the Hall was on-

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ly a *prevailing tradition*, a flying rumour, a very diſtant report. To the more ſteady part of the ſociety it was better known; for to the preſent moment is that cuſtom of *declaiming* continued, of the ceſſation of which the inaccurate Hiſtorian has complained. All young men of three years ſtanding, whether Gentlemen-Commoners or dependent members, who belong to Magdalen College, are ſtill called upon in their turns to diſcharge this uſeful exerciſe, before the whole College, immediately after dinner, while the ſociety and their viſitants are yet ſitting at their reſpective tables. Neither is the Gentleman-commoner exempted from any other exerciſe which the College requires of its dependent members. *Plebeian* and *patrician* ſtudent are ſubject alike to the literary and religious regulations of the houſe, and both are compelled to keep the full Term.

After declaring the *declamation* to have become extinct, Mr. Gibbon adds that *the obvious methods of public exerciſes*

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and examinations are totally unknown in Magdalen College. The exiſtence of the declamation in its full force, at once diſmiſſes as untrue the former part of this charge. The remaining accuſation that there are no *public examinations*, will be best refuted by taking a view of the terminal exerciſes of the college as they ſucceed to each other. At the end of every term from his admiſſion till he takes his firſt degree, every individual undergraduate of this college muſt appear at a *public examination* before the Preſident, Vice-Preſident, Deans, and whatever Fellows may pleaſe to attend; and cannot obtain leave to return to his friends in any vacation, till he has properly acquitted himſelf according to the following ſcheme. In his *firſt* year he muſt make himſelf a proficient

In the firſt Term, in Salluſt and the Characters of Theophraſtus.

In the ſecond Term, in the firſt ſix books of Virgil's Æneis, and the firſt three books of Xenophon's Anabaſis.

In

In the third Term, in the laſt ſix books of the *Æ*neis, and the laſt four books of the Anabaſis.

In the fourth Term, in the Goſpels of St. Mathew and St. Mark, on which ſacred books, the perſons examined are always called upon to produce a collection of obſervations from the beſt commentators.

During his *ſecond* year, the Undergraduate muſt make himſelf a proficient

In the firſt Term, in Cæſar's Commentaries, and the firſt ſix books of Homer's Iliad.

In the ſecond Term, in Cicero de Oratore, and the ſecond ſix books of the Iliad.

In the third Term, in Cicero de officiis and Dion. Hal. de ſtructurâ Orationis.

In the fourth Term, in the Goſpels of St. Luke and St. John, producing a collection of obſervations from commentators, as at the end of the firſt year.

During his *third* year he muſt make himſelf a proficient

In

In the first Term, in the first six books of Livy, and Xenophon's Cyropædia.

In the second Term, in Xenophon's Memorabilia, and in Horace's Epistles and Art of Poetry.

In the third Term, in Cicero de naturâ Deorum, and in the first, third, eighth, tenth, thirteenth, and fourteenth of Juvenal's Satires.

In the fourth Term, in the first four Epistles of St Paul, producing collections as before.

During his *fourth* and last year he must make himself a proficient

In the first Term, in the first six books of the Annals of Tacitus, and in the Electra of Sophocles.

In the second Term, in Cicero's Orations against Catiline, and in those for Ligarius and Archias; and also in those Orations of Demosthenes which are contained in Mounteney's Edition.

In the third Term, in the Dialogues of Plato published by Dr Forster, and

and in the Georgics of Virgil.

In the fourth Term, in the remaining ten Epiſtles of St Paul, and the Epiſtles General, producing collections as before.

Let the reader carefully weigh in his own mind the above detail of the terminal exerciſes of Magdalen College, and then let him determine, if there be any juſtice or truth in Mr Gibbon's aſſertion that *public exerciſes* and *examinations* are in this ſociety *totally unknown*, and that *neither the Preſident nor the ſociety interfere in the private œconomy of the Tutors and their pupils* It may be true that the terminal exerciſes, upon their preſent plan, may not have been in force more than *thirty* years; yet ought a faithful and accurate Hiſtorian to have been appriſed of their exiſtence, and not to have faſtened upon the ſociety a calumny which (if it was *ever* applicable) could only affect the diſcipline of his own days.

The above exerciſes are impoſed upon every ſtudent, of whatever denomination.

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He has to attend beſides, his Tutor's Lecture once a day, and muſt produce a theme or declamation once a week to the Dean.

There is yet remaining a *public exerciſe*, obſerved by the Bachelors of Arts previous to the degree of M. A. Every candidate for that degree is required by the ſtatutes of the Univerſity to read ſix Lectures in Natural and Moral Philoſophy in the public ſchools. For time out of mind theſe Lectures have been unfrequented, and every individual who aſcends the roſtrum, ſpends the *major pars horæ* during which he is ſuppoſed to read, in ſilent but vain expectation of an audience. To preſerve to this exerciſe its original utility, every Bachelor of Arts of Magdalen College, even though he may be impeded by a Cure at two or three hundred miles diſtance, is, previous to his Maſter's degree, called upon to read an equal number of Lectures, on ſeparate days, before the Preſident, Vice-Preſident,

Dean,

Dean, and all Bachelors of Arts and Undergraduates of his College, in the Antichapel, immediately after Morning Prayers. Unleſs he complies with this regulation he cannot be preſented for his degree. Whenever such Lectures are read, it is the buſineſs of all the junior part of the ſociety to be preſent. They are also required to attend in the same place three diſtinct Lectures in every term, that is twelve in a year, from three regular Lecturers appointed by the College from the body of the Fellows. They receive from theſe in turn four annual Lectures each, in Natural and Moral Philoſophy, and in Divinity. Many excellent Lectures, eſpecially in Divinity, has the Author of this Vindication there heard, and has found himſelf improved by them, at years and in a ſtate of mental improvement much more advanced than thoſe of the Undergraduate Gibbon. Equal inſtruction might have been derived by the Hiſtorian from attendance on ſuch occaſions, had

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he not often been engaged in a frolic when he ſhould have been fixed to a form. The perſons employed in the reading of theſe Lectures have generally been Tutors of the College, men who *promiſed to teach*, and have taught every ſpecies of uſeful knowledge—men who might probably be ignorant of ſome ſciences, but none who could be *defective in all*, according to the poſſibilities of Mr Gibbon's calculation.

Mr Gibbon was *fourteen months* in Oxford. He had in that time two Tutors. The firſt he pronounces to have been one of the beſt of the tribe, though unable at the time to judge of his attainments, or to form a juſt verdict by compariſon of his relative merit. Of Dr Waldegrave the memory is ſtill grateful to thoſe that knew him. Even his auſtere pupil Mr Gibbon allows, that he was *learned*, *pious*, *mild*, *moral* and *abſtemious*. Then follows the catalogue of his imperfections. His knowledge of the world was confined to the Univerſity, *his learning*

was

was of the laſt age. The Doctor, it ſeems †, thought *one page of Chillingworth's Religion of Protestants worth a library of Swiſs divinity.* He was one of that *order of men whoſe eyes are dazzled by the light of philoſophy*, a man too intelligent to be deluded by an ignis fatuus. He diſapproved of Swiſs education. And what man of ſenſe will not as readily diſapprove of the modern practice of truſting young men of family and fortune in the hands of Swiſs preceptors? That there may be pleaſure and ſome uſe in ſuch a meaſure is not denied, but every nice obſerver muſt have noticed, that it never fails to undermine and ſhake the fabric of their religious perſuaſions, aud to furniſh them with the deſpicable cavils of the ſceptic and atheiſt. Can it be urged that Mr Gibbon himſelf was an exception? If he had contempt for religion, where did he acquire it? at Oxford or Lauſanne?

But to return to Dr Waldegrave, and his imperfections. *His faculties were not*

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† p. 417.

of the first rate, that is, he despised Swiss divinity. *He was satisfied like his fellows with the slight and superficial discharge of an important task.* Of what task? Of instructing Mr Gibbon. Was it wonderful that any man, especially a scholar, should be disinclined to the laborious task of conducting a reader of Phædrus through the labyrinths of literature? The patience of the Doctor, his good temper and condescension must have been of the finest quality, to have submitted for the sake of any remuneration to read Terence with a school-boy so miserably deficient. It was all he *could* perform; and if the sum of Mr Gibbon's improvement under him be confined *to three or four Latin plays*, he cannot with any justice blame either the University or Dr Waldegrave.

But let us examine the matter more accurately. Mr Gibbon entered the University early in April 1752. As Easter day fell in that year on the 29th of March, he must have entered in the Vacation following

lowing, and we can hardly ſuppoſe that the young men could be returned from their friends to their Tutor ſo as to commence lecture before April 15th. From that time to the ſummer vacation is three calendar months, or about 13 weeks. If we deduct the ſhort Whitſun-tide vacation which happened in the interval, we find that *ten weeks* will compriſe the whole of Mr Gibbon's attendance upon the Lectures of Dr Waldegrave. For he tells us that during his abſence in the ſummer vacation, the Doctor accepted a College living, and *on my return*, ſays he, *I no longer found him in Oxford.* His other Tutor he never attended at all. To Dr Waldegrave *alone* then he was indebted for the three or four Latin plays which he read while at Oxford, and these muſt have been all read in the ſpace of ten weeks. Four plays conſiſt of twenty acts. Two acts therefore of Terence muſt have been read per week by Mr Gibbon in his Tutor's apartment. Now if we

remember

remember that the academical week never exceeds five days, and that Mr Gibbon made many excurſions, and framed many apologies for abſence, one of theſe two important concluſions muſt follow; he has either given us an exaggerated account of his proficiency, or Dr Waldegrave performed wonders. With ſuch a pupil, a pupil who acknowledges *lazineſs* and *indiſpoſition*, who could have done more? It is almoſt paſt credit that he ſhould have been able to effect ſo much.

It ſeems neceſsary here to remark, that when young men appear in an Engliſh Univerſity, it is preſumed that they are in the habit of application, and are old enough to continue their ſtudies without compulſion, actuated by a knowledge of the expedience of reſearch and a deſire to comply with the wiſhes of their friends. Their attendance upon their Tutor continues for an hour only in every day; the time of their abſence is the reason in which they are to prepare

themſelves

themſelves for his next Lecture. Mr Gibbon at ſuch times ought to have been ſtudying Terence, and to have himſelf illuſtrated that elegant claſsic *by compariſon with ancient and modern theatres* in his cloſet. If only *a dry and literal interpretation of the Author's text* filled up the whole hour of his Lecture, it ſo happened, becauſe the pupil had not looked at the book till the Tutor opened it, and was only able to ſpell when he ought to have read off his leſson with fluency. The ſmall ſalary which a college Tutor receives for his trouble, is doubly earned by a ſingle hour of ſuch daily perplexity. If Mr Gibbon was ſo puny a ſcholar, that he was of neceſsity inactive as soon as his Tutor quitted the leading ſtring, he ſhould, as we have before obſerved, have been furniſhed with a dry nurse or pædagogue.

In vindication of the perſon who ſucceeded Dr Waldegrave in the care

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of Mr Gibbon, it is impoſsible to say any thing. His name being ſuppreſsed, leaves it doubtful at whom the writer levels his cenſure, and juſtifies the concluſion, that when he wrote that character he felt himſelf to be penning a libel. He was perhaps conſcious that he had overſtrained the truth, as he did, in another inſtance, when he aſserted that as a gentleman-commoner he was permitted to aſsociate with the Fellows—a cuſtom which never exiſted. That ſuch a character as he has drawn, might not have been found in the Univerſity, few will be so bold as to maintain; that any one, preciſely of that deſcription, was appointed to the office of a Tutor in Magdalen College and tolerated in it, may be doubted. It is not impoſsible, it is highly improbable. In every ſociety are to be found characters unworthy of it; characters that are uſeleſs, and sometimes characters that are vicious. A College, whatever qualifications it may

inſiſt upon in thoſe whom it elects into its vacancies, will always acquire and always wear the ſame variety of appearance as the world at large. It will comprehend the ſportſman, the jockey, the toper, the quid-nunc, the idler, and the petit-maitre, as well as the ſtudent, ſo long as the diſpoſitions and deſires of men are different. We may diſcover in every department of life this mixture of the worthy and the unworthy, the weighty and the frivolous, the learned and the empty. Such being the motley complexion of human ſociety, whether viewed as a whole or contemplated in parts, it would be extremely unjuſt to judge of the whole of any profeſsion or ſeminary by a particular ſample. *Far be it from me or from any faithful Hiſtorian,* ſays Mr Gibbon (ſpeaking of the Univerſities in his Vindication †) *to impute to reſpectable ſocieties the faults of ſome individual members.* And yet has this very Hiſtorian indiſcriminately included

† p. 602.

ded all perſons, not only of his own college and Univerſity, but of Cambridge as well as Oxford, in the ſame pragmatical manifeſto of incapacity. The members of Magdalen College are *monks* (it was well he did not ſtile them *monkeys*) and if he enquires into the manufactures of theſe monks, nay if he extends the enquiry to other colleges of Oxford or Cambridge, *a ſilent bluſh or a ſcornfull frown* is the only reply. He has heard of nothing performed by the monks of any college. May not the ſilent bluſh and ſcornful frown, ſteal over the cheek and dwell upon the brow of theſe ſocieties in return, when they reflect that the ſelf-ſufficient Hiſtorian was ſo abſorbed in writing his own vain Memoirs, as to be ignorant of all their performances? Who has peopled the page of the Reviewer? Shines the Author of the Decline and Fall *alone* in the firmament of criticiſm? May it not boaſt of many a luminary of Oxonian and Cantabrigian

abrigian origin, whoſe brightneſs ſuffers no diminution by the proximity of the Hiſtoric ſtar? May it not maintain that while the ſteady and pure beam of a hoſt of uſeful planets is their's, his only is the peſtilential glare of the comet?

The fellows, or monks of my time (he Hiſtorian is ſtill ſpeaking of Magdalen College) *were decent easy men who ſupinely enjoyed the gifts of their Founder. From the toil of reading, or thinking, or writing, they had abſolved their conſcience.* Not to inſiſt upon the injuſtice of this aſſertion by producing every inſtance which may ſerve to diſprove the truth of it, it ſhall only be obſerved, that one of the *decent, easy* and *ſupine monks* thus ſtigmatized by Mr Gibbon for their idleneſs and averſion to reading, thinking, and writing, was the late pious and excellent Biſhop of Norwich, Dr Horne. The chronological catalogue of the writings of this very idle monk of Magdalen College, which appears at the end of

Jones's

Jones's life of him, contains *one and thirty* diſtinct publications, beſides a variety of inferior pieces. The firſt of these publications made its appearance in 1751, and as Mr Gibbon did not enter the Univerſity till April 1752, he could not have been ignorant that there was at leaſt one ſplendid inſtance to confute his aſſertion.

Were it neceſſary to attempt a refutation of the charge of indolence as it affects the reſt of the Univerſity, by calling to mind every ſtudious contemporary of the Hiſtorian, the catalogue ſhould begin with the name of Kennicott. But having mentioned this laborious and indefatigable collator, we may reſt upon his Atlantæan ſhoulders the whole weight of our cauſe, and let him ſtand alone, an editor of mountainous deſert, who lifts his head far above the reach of the thunders and luminous coruſcations of Gibbon. Let us but compare the work of this writer, *quod humeri ferè mille hominum ferre recusarent*, with the ſmaller labours

of

of Gibbon, and what are they? Let us conſider him as the publiſher of a Hebrew Bible, which gives us at one view all the various readings of nearly *ſeven hundred* Manuſcripts and Editions, preſerved in all quarters of the world, and what are the ſix quartos of Gibbon, and all the reſearches which attended them? Can they boaſt of being the conſequence of more labour and induſtry? can they claim the palm for ſuperior utility? No—while the Coloſſus Kennicott literally *beſtrides the world*, it is the inferior lot of Mr Gibbon to be great only among us *petty men*, who

Walk under his huge legs, and peep about
To find ourſelves diſhonorable graves ||.

As a Gentleman-commoner I was admitted (ſays Mr Gibbon erroneously) *to the ſociety of the fellows, and fondly expected that ſome queſtions of literature would be the amuſing and inſtructing topics of their diſcourſe.* If admitted, he was admitted by favour only, and was not of ſuch conſequence as to be entitled to a chair

|| Shak.

chair in that room, with the converſation of which he was ſo much diſappointed. But, if admitted, ought he not to have known, that queſtions of literature are ſeldom made the ſubject of diſcourſe in any circle of recreation. Would not the ſtudent who ſhould attempt to introduce a critical diſcuſſion of any kind, among the mixed company of a common-room, in the hour of free converſation, deſervedly be ridiculed for a proof ſo ill-timed of his ſelf-ſufficiency? At ſuch a ſeaſon let Fellows of Colleges be permitted to diſcourſe upon indifferent ſubjects, without the unmanly and unmannerly imputation of being abſorbed in *port* and *prejudice*, and let the fountain of erudition be ſealed, or only referred to as modeſty and the occaſion may warrant. If converſation chance to light upon the trite topics of *college buſineſs* and *politics*, if it even deſcend to *perſonal anecdote* and *private ſcandal*, the ſchool-boy indulged with a ſeat for the day, ought not to be angry

that

that no mention is made of *Phædrus* or *Cornelius Nepos*, nor ſhould the accompliſhed Hiſtorian be offended, that he finds no room for a quotation from *Baronius* or *Tillemont*. Whatever the juvenile taſte of Mr Gibbon might diſdain in the converſation of that room, it was, at the time in which he found, it ſo diſagreeable, enlivened by the pleaſantry and good humour of Horne, and is well remembered to have been frequently reſorted to by Lowth, then in the zenith of his abilities. Can it be ſuppoſed that the one entered it to pick up hints for his *Commentary on the Pſalms?* or the other to gather materials for his *Hebrew Prælections?*

Whatever Mr Gibbon may have haſtily aſſerted againſt Magdalen College, it is ſufficiently clear from his Memoirs, that the thought of having been expelled from it *ſat heavy on his ſoul*, and was ever conſidered by him as an inſurmountable diſgrace. This is particularly evident

when

when he declares of Mr Locke, *The philoſopher deſpiſed the academical bigots who expelled his perſon and condemned his principles* †. Here he ſuppoſes his reader will ſuffer him to eſcape from imputation, by allowing the two caſes of Locke and Gibbon to be parallel. But nothing parallel is to be found in them. Mr Locke was removed from his ſtudentſhip of Chriſt Church upon a ſuppoſition of factious and diſloyal behaviour. Mr Gibbon was repulsed from Magdalen College, for his irregularities and extravagances. Mr Locke was diſmiſſed, not by *the academical bigots* (a term which in Mr Gibbon's vocabulary ſignifies *the University*) but by a ſpecial order of King Charles II, as Viſitor of the College. His majeſty, at the inſtigation of Charles Earl of Middleton, Secretary of State, applied to Dr Fell, then Dean of Chriſt Church, and enforced his expulſion, by expreſſing aſtoniſhment that Locke ſhould be ſuffered to retain any place of profit in

† P. 34.

in that Society. The philoſopher then was expelled by the King, and not by his College; a concluſion eaſily to be maintained, when we remember that the college afterwards offered to admit him again as a ſupernumerary ſtudent, the vacancy occaſioned by his diſmiſſion having been filled up. Mr Gibbon, on the contrary, was not a martyr of party, he was expelled for indiſcretions by the Univerſity itſelf, by Magdalen College—and *therefore* they are *academical bigots*, to be *deſpised* by every *philoſopher*.

Let us now quit Magdalen College that we may beſtow a few comments on a general charge of the Hiſtorian, which affects all parts of the Univerſity alike. *In the Univerſity of Oxford*, ſays Mr Gibbon, *the greater part of the public Profeſſors have for theſe many years given up altogether even the pretence of teaching*. Let us reply with all poſſible nicety to this formidable accuſation. There are in the Univerſity of Oxford *twenty*

Profeſſorſhips.

Profeſſorſhips. They ſhall be all mentioned in their turns, and ſome account ſhall be given of the duties performed by each Profeſſor. The Regius Profeſſor of Divinity—reads his Lectures regularly, and (if the Author miſtakes not) no young man can take orders in the dioceſe of Oxford, without producing to the Biſhop a certificate of his having attended them. The Margaret Profeſſor of Divinity—reads a public Lecture once in every term. The Regius Profeſſor of Hebrew, the Prælector in Anatomy, the Vinerian Profeſſor, and the Prælector in Chemiſtry—read on certain days of every week during term. The Regius Profeſſor of Modern Hiſtory does the ſame, giving without interruption both public and private Lectures, in perſon for the moſt part, and by ſubſtitute when his impaired health confines him at home. The Profeſſor of Geometry—reads in like manner, by 'ſelf or deputy. The Profeſſor of Aſtronomy, both in that capacity, and as

Profeſſor

Profeſſor of Natural Hiſtory, delivers regularly Lectures deſervedly popular and much frequented. The late noble but unfortunate Profeſſor of Civil Law, began his office with reading Lectures, and only deſiſted for want of an audience. The preſent, newly appointed, (the Author has heard it from the firſt authority) means to read. The late Profeſſor of Botany—*did* read, but Botany not being much in faſhion among the younger members of either Univerſity, he, for want of pupils, employed the latter part of his life in collecting materials for a Flora Græca, the probable utility of which cannot be diſputed. Dying in conſequence of a diſorder contracted in Greece, he bequeathed his work for completion to his able friend Dr Wenman, then Profeſſor of Civil Law, but who was ſoon afterwards drowned by accident in the river Cherwell. The Profeſſor of Poetry—reads a public Lecture once in every term. The Profeſſor of Muſic—

gives

gives alſo a public Lecture in each term. The Anglo-Saxon Profeſſor—commences lecture-reading in the courſe of the next year, and the appointment being a new one, there cannot yet have been any omiſſion in its duties.

If the reader will be at pains to compute the number of Profeſſors who, according to the above ſtatement, cannot be accuſed of any neglect, he will find that *fifteen* out of *twenty* are clearly exculpated from Mr Gibbon's charge. The remaining *five* may poſſibly read their Lectures as punctually, the Author of this Vindication being unable to make any report of them, for want of knowledge reſpecting them. Mr Gibbon himſelf has informed us, that Sir William Scott, when Camden's Profeſſor of Hiſtory, wrote at leaſt, and therefore probably read, Lectures on Hiſtory, *which I am aſſured*, ſays he, *would compoſe, were they given to the public, a moſt valuable treatise.* This aſſertion no one will be diſposed to queſtion,

ion, nor will any one deny that Warton, the late Poet-Laureat, if he read not his Lectures, filled the same office with eminent utility, as the Author of the Hiſtory of Poetry. Nothing however is here pleaded in juſtification of the omiſſion of lecture-reading, or to diſguise the evident tendency of a precedent of this kind, to make the Profeſſorſhip to which it belongs a mere ſinecure. Arch-biſhop Laud's Profeſſor of Arabic, Dr White, whether he reads Lectures in Arabic or not, has ably proved by his Bampton Lectures, that he is worthy of the office he holds, and of any honours which can be annexed to it, for the ſake of learning, and of that religion of which he is ſo accompliſhed an advocate.

To Mr Gibbon's unqualified aſſertion therefore, that the *greater part* of the public Profeſſors have for *theſe many years given up altogether even the pretence of teaching*, whether borrowed or fabricated in his own imagination, we may confident-

ly

ly reply that it is *untrue*. We have ſeen that by far the *greater part*, a majority which nearly amounts to all, cannot fairly be impeached of wilful omiſſion, or of any the ſlighteſt neglect. The places then are not become *uſeleſs*, according to Mr Gibbon's ungenerous declaration, and when he argues, ſuppoſing them ſuch, that they ought without delay to be aboliſhed, he adopts thoſe Gallic principles, which he has always ſenſe enough to abhor, but when ſpeaking of the Univerſity or Church. If the mere plea of inutility were admitted as ſufficient cauſe of deprivation, eſtates and offices would ſoon be in a ſtate of continual transfer at the will of the factious and diſſatisfied, and ſociety would be a mere whirlpool of revolution. The offices and ſalaries of the Profeſſors indeed, ſo far from being uſeleſs, if carefully examined, are found to be conferred on perſons who, for the moſt part, conſcientiouſly diſcharge the duties of their ſituation, and are deſerving of the

the ſtations which they fill.

The purpoſe of this ſhort Vindication, has been only to expoſe the flagrant injuſtice of Mr Gibbon, ſo far as relates to the Univerſity of Oxford and Magdalen College. His aſperſions, as they affect the Church in general, the Author leaves to be refuted by ſome more able hand. He cannot, however, help obſerving, that the favourite reproaches with which the literary Major loads his bouncing hiſtorical fuſeè, when he means to let fly at the Church, are *ſuperſtition*, *ignorance*, and *prejudice*. If by the firſt he means *religion*, the Church may thank him for a compliment. The two laſt, if he conſiders the Chriſtian religion as ſuperſtition, he firmly faſtens upon himſelf. He once rejoices † that the hands of the prieſthood are diſarmed from the powers of *perſecution*. Were he ſtill living, the Author of theſe pages would propoſe to him an hiſtorical diſcuſſion of two very important queſtions.

Who

† P. 153.

Who kindled the faggot in days of yore?
Was it not *the Papiſt?* And who ſet the guillotine to work in modern times? Was it not *the Philoſopher?* What connection has the Church of England with either? Leſs than Mr Gibbon himſelf—and no one can accuſe *him* of being much *a papiſt* or much *a philoſopher*.

It ſhall only be obſerved, in addition to what has been ſaid, that the Hiſtorian has in theſe Memoirs fully proved his title to the character which Meuſelius has given him, when he ſays that in every part of his work (paſsim) are to be found *ſiniſtrè diata et veritati non ſatis conſentanea*. To *Truth* indeed, in whatever acceptation, his attachment does not appear to be very ſtrong.

And what is *truth?*' twas Pilate's queſtion put
To truth itſelf, that deign'd him no reply.
And wherefore? will not God impart his light
To them that aſk it?—Freely—'tis his joy,
His glory, and his nature to impart.

But

But to the proud, uncandid, inſincere,
Or negligent enquirer, not a ſpark.
What's that which brings contempt upon a book
And him that writes it, though the ſtile be neat,
The method clear, and argument exact?
That makes a miniſter in holy things
The joy of many and the dread of more?
What pearl is it that rich men cannot buy,
That learning is too proud to gather up,
But which the poor and the deſpiſed of all
Seek and obtain, and often find unſought?
Tell me, and I will tell thee, what is *truth*.

With this very appoſite paſſage from the Taſk of Mr Cowper, a paſſage which probably was written with direct alluſion to Mr Gibbon and his works, ſhall this

ſhort

ſhort vindication be cloſed. Adieu to the vain Memoirs of the philoſophical repreſentative of Lymington; a borough which (if we conſider the affair of Brothers) has had the ſingular fortune of returning to the Britiſh Senate, in the ſame century, and almoſt in the ſame ſeſſion, the moſt *ſceptical* and the moſt *credulous* of its members. Of Mr Geſner the Hiſtorian has ſarcaſtically obſerved, *when I asked* ‡ *his proper direction, the vain old man covered half a ſheet of paper* (i. e. filled half a dozen lines) *with the fooliſh enumeration of his titles and offices.* How much leſs excuſable the vain-glory of Gibbon, who without the plea of age to excuſe him, wrote ſix treatiſes of his own military and hiſtorical exploits, retailed every little flattery which had been offered him, without ſubtracting for adulation and exceſſive compliment, and filled a quarto of 185 pages, with the hiſtory of—*My* life and writings.

‡ p. 70.

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